

Cost Recovery Special Use Fee for Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker



- A \$150 per climber mountain use fee was implemented in 1995 as a cost-recovery program to recoup to the park some of the costs of the mountaineering program on Mt. McKinley and Mt. Foraker. Initially the fee recovered about 30% of the program cost.
- Since 1995 the cost of the program to the park has increased substantially, primarily due to inflation. Currently the fee covers approximately 17% of the mountaineering program cost.
- The fee was increased to \$200 in 2005 to cover increased operating costs of the program including some of the cost of implementing a human waste removal program from the West Buttress of Mt. McKinley.
- The Cost Recovery Special Mountain Use Fee is authorized under federal law: 31 USC 9701 (charge for a service "service of thing of value provided") and 16 USC Sec 3a (allows a park to recover all costs and retain the money in the park). Implementation guidance is provided by OMB Circular A-25. The program is managed by DM Part 346 (Cost Recovery) and NPS Management Policies 8.2.6.1 and DO/RM 53 (Special Park Uses).

- Revenue from the fee is used exclusively to fund portions of the McKinley/Foraker mountaineering program provided by the National Park Service.
- The Cost Recovery special use fee offsets the cost of:
 - Administering a mandatory 60 day pre-registration program
 - Preventative search and rescue education
 - mountaineering "booklet" available online in nine languages with detailed information to help prepare climbers for the extreme mental and physical stresses associated with high altitude mountaineering on Denali
 - mandatory orientation with a mountaineering ranger prior to beginning the expedition.
 - o Training for mountaineering rangers
 - Staffing of acclimatized rescue personnel (including volunteers) at three locations on the mountain (Base Camp at 7,200'; 14,200' Camp and High Camp at 17,200')
 - A human waste management program
- The fee has enhanced resource protection and visitor experience by reducing the amount of trash and human waste on Mt. McKinley.
- The mountaineering program as constituted today has significantly reduced the incidence
 of deaths and accidents on the mountain. A study published in 2008 by the Journal of
 High Altitude Medicine and Biology entitled "Mountaineering Fatalities on Denali"
 concluded that the NPS mountaineering program had reduced the historical fatality rate
 by 53%.
- Annually, an average of 1,000 climbers pay the \$200 cost recovery fee. Guides working
 for the six mountain guide concessioners do not pay the fee, but their clients do. Fee
 revenue in FY10 was \$202,575.
- 50% of McKinley/Foraker climbers are not U.S. citizens. U.S. citizens and foreign nationals pay the same \$200 fee.
- The fee does not cover the cost of search and rescue missions on the mountain. Visitors are not charged for search and rescue services.
- McKinley/Foraker climbers make up less than ½ of 1 percent of all visitors to the park.
 The average cost to the park of the program for these 1000 visitors is almost
 \$1,200/person. The average cost to the park for all other park visitors is about
 \$37/person.
- During the past four years, the leadership of the park has met with the American Alpine Club, Access Fund, American Mountain Guides Association, and other stakeholders to discuss possible alternatives to a fee increase. No alternative means of funding has been secured through these discussions.
- Denali staff thoroughly reviewed the mountaineering program and over the last 18 months reduced its cost by over \$250,000. Most of the savings were achieved through the new high altitude helicopter contract and elimination of a permanent staff position.
- Program staffing relies heavily on volunteers to supplement paid mountaineering ranger staff. In FY10, 46 volunteers contributed over 10,000 hours to the program. If this volunteer contribution had to be replaced with paid staff, additional costs would exceed \$500,000 annually.

- Congress appropriated a total of \$440,000 to fund the high altitude helicopter component
 of the mountaineering program. No other specific funding for the mountaineering program
 has ever been appropriated by Congress.
- The projected cost of the McKinley/Foraker mountaineering program in FY11 is \$1,160,000. Subtracting the \$440,000 specifically appropriated for the program, a balance of about \$720,000 remains to be funded out of other park operating funds, cost recovery, or a combination of both.
- Staffing and basic program components of the mountaineering program have changed little since 2002.
- NPS cannot sustain the program at a safe and functional level without diverting funds from other critical park operations, such as anti-poaching patrols, interpretive programs, and maintenance.
- Any change in the cost recovery mountaineering special use fee would not be implemented until the 2012 climbing season.

Revised as of October 28, 8:27am.